

# Forest Fire Lookout Association

## CA-Pacific Area Chapter

30021 McKenna Heights Court, Valley Center CA 92082



### *2017 ANNUAL REPORT*

Hi Samsara,

Welcome aboard as our new leader. This is my third year as Director of CA-Pacific which includes all counties within the upper part of Los Padres National Forest to the Mendocino National Forest and from Interstate 5 to the West Coastline.

In 2015 the FFLA CA-Pacific Director signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Cal Fire and the Konocti Lookout Chapter was formed in Lake County, CA. I recruited and trained 29 new FFLA Members (Lookouts) for a short fire season (45 days). In 2016, an additional 20 new members were trained and Cal Fire LNU Unit Chief sent a "Thank you Letter" for the 1728 hours FFLA Volunteers staffed the Konocti Tower. Since then, we have been making very good progress.



### **2017 Konocti Lookout Tower**

Konocti Chapter continued to function with only minor oversight. Jim Adams, Chairman; Ric Abrams, Tower Leader; and the Chapter Officers have done an outstanding job in recruiting, training and staffing this year. The Chapter now has approximate 45 Volunteers and the tower is staffed almost every day from mid-May thru mid-November each year.

The FFLA Volunteers have completed some amazing upgrades to the Konocti Tower this year. A much needed solar panel was donated by Jacob Hammond (Sun Farms) and was installed which supplies several batteries with sufficient power for lights and a microwave. Also a new 3' by 5' cabinet was built and installed by Jerry Garser (Garser Cabinets) for miscellaneous supplies and maps furnished by Cal Fire. A donated Base Station is being programmed and will be installed for the 2018 season.



New Cabinet



Two 12 volt Batteries stored in New Cabinet

With a great amount of coordination, the Konocti Chapter got a very nice article by Glenda Anderson, "The Press Democrat" on July 29<sup>th</sup>. Review at:

<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/7224400-181/lake-countys-mount-konocti-fire?artslide=0>

**Some FFLA stats for the Konocti Lookout for 2017.** With a total of 41 volunteers (25 existing members & 16 new) 33 smoke were reports, of which 21 were "first reports".

Our first day in the tower for Smoke watch & training was June 10, 2017 and the last day in the tower was November 15 (158 Days) at the end of Cal Fire's official fire season.

- Of those 158 days we staffed the tower 142 days (16 days not staffed due to weather)
- Of the 142 days there was up to four Volunteers in the tower on any given days for training; therefore the total number of Volunteer days = 255
  - Based on an 8 hour shift = 2,040 Volunteer hours
    - Four Volunteers with the most hours this year are:
      - 1) 168 hours = Jack Hewitt
      - 2) 149 hours = Mark Meredith
      - 3) 146 hours = Jim Adams
      - 4) 133 hours = Joel Lundergreen

On the downside, we had several windows broken (act of Vandalism) which all have been repaired.

## Copernicus Peak Lookout Tower

After an eighteen month process of negotiations between Cal Fire Morgan Hill, CA (Santa Clara County) and the Forest Fire Lookout Association (FFLA), a Memorandum of Agreement was signed on January 23, 2017. On February 9, 2017, a meeting was held to work out the final details for the upcoming training classes to be held on March 31 and April 1, 2017. Several recruitment exercises were conducted at the local Fair Grounds and other Cal Fire events with 25 new volunteers signing up for tower training.



A trip to Copernicus Peak Lookout Tower was scheduled for March 30, 2017 to open and inventory the Tower for the first time since the new roof was completed in September 2016. Cal Fire coordinated with ABC NEWS San Francisco Bay area to tape footage for a short two minutes video at Copernicus Peak Lookout Tower which was shown March 30, 2017 at 4:55pm and again at 5:55pm.

<http://abc7news.com/news/cal-fire-seeks-lookout-attendants-for-copernicus-peak/1827073/>

ABC News doing a story on the Partnership between Cal Fire and the Forest Fire Lookout Association (FFLA) on March 30, 2017. Bill Ulmer, Director of FFLA Central California Western Region, explaining how to operate an Osborne Firefinder to one of the new Volunteers.





Bill Ulmer being interviewed at Copernicus Peak Lookout Tower, but the segment was cut prior to airing.

Classroom Training at CAL FIRE, Morgan Hill, CA March 31 and April 1, 2017. After the ABC NEWS report, an additional 14 locals expressed an interest in be a Lookout Volunteer, bring the total to thirty nine (39) signed-up for Lookout Training.



As Director of FFLA Cal/Pacific, this completed my goal of getting the Copernicus Peak Lookout Tower re-opened with trained Volunteers during the 2017 fire season.

All in all, the season was a success in regards to the tower. It was staffed nearly every weekend with the new tower volunteers really stepping up weekend after weekend. We are now finished for the season and the tower was closed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November. Cal Fire's goal of having the tower open every week-end during the fire season was accomplished with Volunteer Lookouts for 26 week-ends and having 33 smoke reports to the Emergency Command Center.

An additional note of interest: A Danish film crew were in California working on a documentary on the California Fire Service and visited the tower on November 30<sup>th</sup>. They spent nearly 4 hours at the tower with two Volunteer Lookouts and did not want to leave after their visit. The documentary is supposed to be released next spring.

The plan for next year will be to start recruiting in January with classroom training scheduled at the end of February. Hands on training at the tower will begin in March and the tower will re-open mid-April to mid-May dependent on the rain we receive.

**Additional plans & challenges for 2018:**

- Additional meetings are scheduled for January and February 2018 with the Santa Clara Ranger Unit to prepare for staffing Mt Oso Towers.
  - Tower is also in need of roof repair; however, Cal Fire is willing to complete the repairs if FFLA will staff the Lookout on a regular basis.
- Advertise for additional perspective volunteers for the 2018 fire season.
- Set-up training classes for new volunteers.
- Fundraising or Grant to cover cost of replacing floor in Konocti Tower and other maintenance items.
- Establish field trips and other activities for group unity.
- Add additional towers to the NHLR list.
- Mendocino N/F who has 23 towers listed with peakbagging.com:
  - Coordinate with Cal Fire
    - Cal Fire owns four Fire towers and only one is currently being staffed by paid seasonal employees (High Glade)
  - Coordinate with the Forest Service
    - Forest Service owned nineteen of which twelve have been destroyed. Four are on the NHLR

A website & Facebook page has been established for CA-Pacific. ([www.ffla-ccwr.org](http://www.ffla-ccwr.org))

My research of Ca-Pacific Tower is on-going, but due to lack of internet data it is my opinion that many of these towers have been removed or destroyed. The search is never over.

Respectfully submitted,

*Bill Ulmer*

Director, FFLA CA-Pacific Chapter

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